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LETTER DATED 22 DECEMBER 1998 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to forward herewith a copy of a letter dated 8 December 1998 addressed to me by President Ange-Félix Patassé concerning the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA).

You may wish to bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

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Annex

[Original: French]

Letter dated 8 December 1998 from the President of the Central African Republic addressed to the Secretary-General

I should like to remind you that during my statement at the Conference of Heads of State of Africa and of France in Paris, I expressed the hope that the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) would be maintained in my country until the presidential elections which are to be held in 1999. This was in accordance with the original request put forward in my letter of 8 January 1998, in which I had sought the establishment of a United Nations mission in order to monitor the legislative elections as well as the presidential elections.

I am happy to inform you that the support authorized by the Security Council giving MINURCA the necessary mandate to provide us with assistance within the framework of the legislative elections has been an exceptional success. In actual fact, without such support, it would have been very difficult for us to hold credible and transparent elections peacefully.

I should also like to point out that the technical assistance provided by MINURCA has, to a large extent, enhanced the capacity and competence of our own citizens and, therefore, has helped prepare them to carry out in the future the tasks entrusted to them in the electoral field.

The role of MINURCA in promoting good governance and national reconciliation is incalculable, not only in the search for a compromise among the various political sensibilities, but also with regard to its support for the Monitoring and Arbitration Committee established by the National Reconciliation Conference.

The presence of MINURCA in our country has also been most valuable in many other areas. I should like in this connection to refer if only to the Mission's initial mandate, relating to its assistance for the forces of law and order for maintaining security in Bangui and its immediate vicinity.

The military component of MINURCA carried out its mandate with much competence and effectiveness. In addition, the Mission's Civilian Police Unit undertook to retrain our National Police and the Gendarmerie.

In order to be able to support these activities, we have, in collaboration with MINURCA, begun the essential process of restructuring our armed forces. A joint MINURCA/Government Commission, established in September 1998, has made enormous progress, drawing up the basic legal texts that should form the basis for our defence policy as well as the organization of the armed forces. The Commission has also proposed a seven-point programme for restructuring, which would include training, building of infrastructures, provision of equipment and the development of the indispensable esprit de corps with the certainty of reassembling the military units.

Some progress has also been made in the socio-economic field. In this regard, we have been able to sign an agreement with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

I have resolutely continued the implementation of the provisions of the Bangui Agreements and the National Reconciliation Pact in accordance with the promise that I made to you. Of course, there are still areas where I must continue to act. I should like to reassure you that, given the environment of peace and stability, I am determined to proceed forward.

From this perspective, the continued presence of MINURCA is becoming imperative. I am the first to admit that the peace which we are currently enjoying, thanks to the presence of MINURCA, is still fragile and may be undermined until we have laid a solid foundation for the maintenance of peace through our own institutions.

Allow me therefore to appeal to you to take the necessary measures in order to ensure that the Security Council extends the mandate of MINURCA until more tangible results have been achieved in restructuring our security forces and until our progressive march towards democratization has been strengthened by the successful organization of the forthcoming presidential elections in 1999.

(Signed) Ange-Félix PATASSÉ